

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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FM AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9261

C O N F I D E N T I A L PHNOM PENH 2426

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: EMR, PINS,MOPS,PFOR, EAID, CB, US

SUBJ: KHMER MORALE

1. ONE OF THE KEY PROBLEMS AT THE PRESENT TIME IS KEEPING UP THE MORALE OF THE KHMERS SO THAT THEY DO NOT FEEL ABANDONED. THE ADVERSE COMMENTS MADE BY MEMBERS OF THE AMERICAN LEGISLATIVE BRANCH ARE GETTING WIDE COVERAGE IN THE LOCAL MEDIA HERE. ALSO THE NEED TO CUT DOWN ON AMMUNITION EXPENDITURES HAS CLEARLY REACHED THE FRONT LINES NOW, WHERE COMMANDERS ARE COMPLAINING THAT THEY HAVE NOT GOT ENOUGH AMMUNITION TO OPPOSE THE ENEMY EFFECTIVELY. THIS LATTER ACCUSATION IS BASICALLY NOT TRUE BECAUSE THEY ARE STILL GETTING ADEQUATE AMOUNTS, ALTHOUGH CONSIDERABLY LESS THAN BEFORE. FOR AN ARMY WHICH WAS TRAINED TO DEPEND ON ITS SUPERIOR FIRE POWER, REDUCTION IN AMMUNITION ALLOTMENTS IS QUICKLY FELT. ALSO THE NEED FOR THE AMERICAN MISSION TO REDUCE THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE FOR WHICH WE HAVE RESPONSIBILITY IN CASE OF EVACUATION IS NOT A FACTOR WHICH WILL BOOST THE MORALE OF THE KHMERS.

2. UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCE MY STAFF AND I HAVE LAUCHED A "COUNTER-OFFENSIVE" TO SHORE UP KHMER MORALE. I SAW THE FOREIGN MINISTER THIS MORNING TO TELL HIM THAT OUR SIX DEPENDENT WIVES WILL BE LEAVING SOMETIME NEXT WEEK ON ONE OF OUR REGULAR FLIGHTS TO BANGKOK IN ORDER TO REDUCE TO THE MINIMUM THOSE WHO NEED TO BE SUPPORTED BY CONFIDENTIAL

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THE LIMITED ESSENTIAL SUPPLIES REACHING THE CAPITAL.

I ALSO TOLD HIM THAT OTHER DIPLOMATIC MISSIONS FOR WHOSE PERSONNEL WE HAVE RESPONSIBILITY MAY FOLLOW SUIT. HOWEVER, THESE MEASURES ARE DESIGNED TO LIGHTEN THE BURDEN OF THOSE FOREIGNERS WHO ARE HERE TO SUPPORT THE GKR. IN SHORT, WE ARE HUNKERING DOWN FOR WHAT MIGHT BECOME A TOUGH DRY SEASON, BUT OUR INTENT TO SUPPORT THE GKR IN ITS EFFORT TO OPPOSE THE ENEMY REMAINS STEADFAST. OUR SENIOR MILITARY PERSONNEL ARE CONVEYING THE SAME MESSAGE TO THE TOP FANK LEADERS.

3. I HAVE AN APPOINTMENT TO SEE THE MARSHAL THIS AFTERNOON. I HAVE NOT SEEN HIM FOR TWO WEEKS. I INTEND TO MAKE THE SAME POINTS WITH HIM. IN ADDITION, I WILL TELL HIM ABOUT OUR PLANS TO AUGMENT THE BIRD AIR CONTRACT IN ORDER TO INCREASE THE NUMBER OF AIR LANDINGS IN PHNOM PENH. SINCE THESE AIR LANDINGS CAN ONLY BRING IN ITEMS IN CRITICALLY SHORT SUPPLY, THE MAIN RESPONSIBILITY RESTS WITH FANK TO DO ALL IT CAN TO GET THE MEKONG OPEN. THIS IS FANK'S AND GKR'S NUMBER ONE RESPONSIBILITY. I ALSO INTEND TO TELL THE MARSHAL THAT THE ADMINISTRATION IS DETERMINED TO GET, ONE WAY OR ANOTHER, ADDITIONAL FUNDS SO THAT THE GKR WILL NOT BE RUNNING OUT OF AMMUNITION OR RICE IN ITS STRUGGLE FOR SURVIVAL.

4. I ALSO PLAN TO SEE THE PRIME MINISTER AND TALK WITH HIM ALONG THE SAME LINES I USED WITH THE FOREIGN MINISTER EARLIER IN THE DAY.

5. I DO NOT KNOW HOW LONG THE MEKONG WILL REMAIN CLOSED. THE INCREASE IN BIRD AIR LANDINGS, WHILE VERY HELPFUL, WILL NOT RESOLVE THE CRITICAL AMMUNITION SHORTAGE NOR THE DRAWDOWN ON RICE STOCKS WHICH NEED TO BE REPLENISHED. I THEREFORE SUGGEST THAT THE ADMINISTRATION KEEP AN OPEN MIND ABOUT A USAF AIR LIFT TO BRING ADEQUATE SUPPLIES INTO PHNOM PENH UNTIL THE MEKONG CAN BE REOPENED. THIS WOULD BE STRICTLY A TEMPORARY EMERGENCY MEASURE TO GAIN TIME FOR FANK TO SOLVE THE PROBLEM OF THE MEKONG.

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